

ON THE PRACTICE OF OVARIOTOMY BY THE NATIVES OF THE
HERBERT RIVER, QUEENSLAND.*

BY N. DE MIKLOUHO-MAÇLAY.

While in Queensland last November, I visited Dalby and met there Mr. Rotsch, who was recommended to me as a man of remarkable personal acquaintance with the country and people of Western Queensland. Mr. Rotsch told me, inter alia, that on his way from the Diamantina to the Herbert River, (about 23° Lat. and 139° Long.), he met with a man who had been staying some time with the Natives living a little up the stream of the Herbert River in the vicinity of the Parrapitshuri Lake.

This man told Mr. Rotsch, that he had noticed amongst these natives, who mostly had indured the "Mikæ" operation, † a peculiar looking girl who appeared to avoid the society of other females and remained always with young men, sharing with them their occupation and toils. This girl was almost destitute of breasts, was very slim limbed, had some hair on the chin, and altogether had a kind of "boyish" appearance.‡

Though this girl appeared to shun other females, she never showed a particular inclination for the young men to whose sexual use she was given.

Two long cicatrices on the groins of the girl were explained by a native, who had been some time on a Station and could speak

*I have seen some time ago a paper on the same subject in the Anthropological Society of Berlin, which was published in the proceedings of the same.

†Vide my letter to Prof. R. Virchow, about the Mikæ operation: Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie Ethnologie und Urgeschichte Sitsung vom 17 April, 1180.

‡In the well known case of Pott, the woman (of 23 years of age) after the operation (ovariotomia) had been performed, never menstruated, her breasts fell away and the muscular system became developed as in a man. (Rob. Barnes, "A Clinical History of the Medical and Surgical Diseases of Women 1878, page 184.")

a little English—"all same—spayed cow," and added that this operation is sometimes performed to give the young men of the tribe a female companion, without the risk that such a kind of "Hetaira" will ever become a mother.* The man explained, by gestures, that after the incisions in the groins are made, the ovaria are torn out.

This tale appeared to me especially interesting, as it was a confirmation of another similar account, I remember, in 1878 to have heard from Mr. E. P. Ramsay, that Mr. J. Macgillivray, the well known naturalist of the "Rattlesnake," had told him about a native woman whom he saw at Cape York, on which the same operation (Ovariectomy) had been performed. Mr. Macgillivray saw himself the woman and convinced himself of the existence of two cicatrices in the groins. The woman was born dumb, and the operation of Ovariectomy was performed to prevent her having dumb-born children.

Although it is strange that the Australian Natives should undertake such dangerous operations, it seems however to me, to be a fact. My reasons for this opinion are:—1. The authenticity of the relaters (Macgillivray and Rotsch). 2. The circumstance that Ovariectomy scarcely can be regarded as an operation more dangerous or complicated† than that of "Mikæ" which has, as known, such a large spread in Australia. 3. The fact that dark races, as a rule, stand dangerous wounds or operations better than the white. 4. That this operation (Ovariectomy) is known to be performed by nations having very little knowledge

*Mr. Bracker of Waroo Station, near Stanthorpe, mentioned to me, that amongst the blacks of that part of Queensland, sterile women were regarded as belonging to every man, as naturally fitted to be prostitutes.

†After *Th. Billroth*, (*Handbuch der Frauenkrankheiten*, 1877, page 215 and 228) the percentage of recoveries after the Ovariectomy is 90,5%.

of Anatomy.* 5. That similar operations on native women have been reported lately from other places of Australia.†

REMARKS ABOUT THE CIRCUMVOLUTIONS OF THE CEREBRUM OF
CANIS DINGO.

BY N. DE MIKLOUHO-MACLAY.

[Plate V.]

Without going into a detailed description of the *gyri* and *sulci* of the brain of the Dingo, a glance of the same (fig. 1.) and even a superficial comparison with the circumvolutions of another dog (fig. 4), proves, that the gyri of the former are more numerous and complicated than that of the later. It is true that on the plate are figured the Brains of two very extreme representatives of the species *Canis*. The one is that of the Dingo, the wild dog of Australia, the other the dog of New Guinea (from the Maclay Coast). The mode of life of both helps to explain the differences of their brains.

The dingo depends upon his skill to provide himself with sufficient food by hunting, which requires often the full use of his intellect. Many of the gentlemen present here know far more than myself about the intelligence and cunning of the dingo; therefore, having no experience of my own to add about this subject, I will say a few words about the Papuan dog.

*Dr. Roberts in his travel from Delhi to Bombay (I found it mentioned in Müller's Archiv., 1873.) speaks about a female eunuch, who had the ovaria cut out; she had no breast, very little adipose tissue on the *Mons veneris* which was hairless, the backside was manlike, she had no menstruation, and no sexual inclination.

†I know from Mr. H. Gilliat, that Mr. Suttor has told him of having seen women similarly operated on, among the blacks on the Herbert and Mulligan Rivers, and that another gentleman had assured him of the same fact. I have heard from Mr. Dufaur, that he had noticed in the diary of Humc, a reference to a similar practice among the blacks.